

Hornet Summer by RosetintedElmax

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Characters: Ben Hanscom, Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough, Dustin Henderson, Eddie Kaspbrak, Eleven | Jane Hopper, Jim "Chief" Hopper, Jonathan Byers, Joyce Byers, Lucas Sinclair, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Mike Hanlon, Mike Wheeler, Nancy Wheeler, Original Characters, Richie Tozier, Stanley Uris, Steve Harrington, Will Byers

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Summary:

The Gardens seemed much more luxurious than they actually were. In real life, the Summer Gardens apartment complex, nicknamed 'The Gardens' by the residents of Hawkins, Indiana, has long since been dubbed the worst place in the area to live. The inhabitants of the Gardens grow up and subsist as outsiders in their own town.

This has its advantages though, and for one girl, this becomes abundantly clear, the summer between her freshman and sophomore year. The Gardens aren't just a group of apartments, no, they're a family.

[Set in Hawkins, Indiana, circa 1986]

Hornet Summer

There were never any new faces in The Gardens.

Richie knew this as a fact, because the last new face had been him, two years prior. Freshly thirteen and just having found out that he had a half-brother, he was shipped off to the middle of nowhere, Indiana, to live with said brother and his family. It had taken some adjustments, but he was quick to learn that living in the Gardens meant you were part of a much larger family, a family that he wouldn't give up for the world.

June of 1986 had already brought much drama and gossip to the whole of Hawkins. It was found out in the beginning of the month that one of the girls in the Freshman class, Richie's year, had gotten pregnant by a Junior and was moving away because she was so ashamed. Lily Leroux, her name was, and Richie wasn't sure he'd ever seen her before the day he heard about her 'condition', and saw her run crying into the bathroom after overhearing some particularly nasty opinions in the hall. Beyond that, his own friend group was always having their petty little arguments, more so than usual. His stepmom, Mrs. Wheeler, always said that people who bicker like that really love each other. He'd never known that arguing could mean anything but hatred. He decided he liked her version better.

The new face in The Gardens was only going to bring more gossip. He noticed the massive amount of inky black curls tied up into a knot on top of her head at first, and how her back was arched backwards with the weight of the two cardboard boxes she was carrying. She was wearing a pair of denim shorts and blue shirt that matched her socks and the scrunchie on her left wrist. The color coordination of her outfit was kind of endearing.

She turned in a slow circle where she was standing next to her family's van, no doubt taking in her new surroundings. When she turned in Richie's direction, she almost immediately locked eyes with him. Sitting on the front stoop directly across from hers in terribly ratty cargo shorts and one of the most vibrant hawaiian shirts he

owned, he was suddenly panicking about being seen in his sorry state by one of the prettiest girls he'd seen in Hawkins.

Her eyes were sweet and bright and gold like honey, large and slanting, with the longest eyelashes he'd ever seen framing them. They were narrowed and calculative, taking the rows of neat, square brick apartment buildings in with a critical gaze and hesitant interest. Her glossed lips were drawn down in a frown, making her sloped nose appear longer and more regal. She looked like she belonged standing on the balcony of a castle turret, not moving into the crappiest place in Hawkins, which might've very well been the crappiest place in Indiana to begin with. She looked away after a few seconds, and Richie was thankful that her scrutinizing gaze was no longer on him. Before she could turn back around, he disappeared through the front door of apartment 9A, already looking for his brother to tell him of the newcomer.

Waverly didn't know what she expected to find in Hawkins. She'd never been to Indiana before, and wondered if it was going to be at all like her small town home in Minnesota. In some ways, it was. The Gardens were, at least, from what she could tell. As her father slowly drove the family van through small streets of identical crumbling brick buildings, she couldn't help but be reminded of the apartment cluster they were leaving behind. Based on a phone call her father had had with the landlord of their building, there were forty buildings in Summer Gardens, each building holding four apartments. That meant there were one hundred and sixty little familial compartments. Her family had been lucky enough to get the last current vacancy, so Waverly also knew that there were one hundred and fifty-nine other families like hers, living in identical apartments to hers. It brought her the comfort of familiarity to know that.

She had been the only one of the family who was sort of excited for the move. While she was upset in some ways to leave Minnesota behind, it wasn't her favorite place. Hawkins was going to be a place for her to start over, and that kind of change was very welcome in her life. She had the whole Summer ahead of her before she started her Sophomore year of high school, to familiarize herself with her surroundings, and maybe even make friends. Her brother and sister

did not seem to think the same way.

Ethan, when told the news, said nothing. In the following days, weeks, even months, he still said nothing. Negative or positive, not a word about the move came out of his mouth, not even on the morning they packed up the van and headed out for Indiana. In a way, it didn't surprise Waverly. Ethan hadn't been speaking about much of anything at home in the recent months. He was seventeen, and her mother had promised her that he was just going through some sulky phase that all teenagers went through, and that sooner or later, she'd be doing the same thing. It concerned her though, his apathetic silence. He had everything he'd been working for in the last few years; he was quarterback for their high school football team, appointed so at the beginning of his Junior year, he was an all A student, and his parents were proud of him. Waverly expected him to yell, make a fuss about moving right before his Senior year, but they got nothing but silence. That was somehow worse.

Henrietta, on the other hand, was much more vocal about her opinion on the move. She was thirteen, and Waverly was certain that she was going through a phase. She had gone through the same phase at that age. Being petty, complaining about everything, and giving her parents attitude were all symptoms of preteen-early teen syndrome. Henri had just finished up her seventh grade year, and apparently thought that she was All That. As if, somehow, her opinion about not wanting to move to the wasteland of Indiana would change her parents' mind. It, of course, didn't, which prompted her to complain about it at every chance she got.

In the end, nothing would have changed Vin Anderson's mind about moving. They had been poor for as long as Waverly could remember, always barely scraping by. In March, he had been offered a promotion, a much better position in the company he was working for, *if* he would move to Indiana. He took the job, no questions asked. Waverly felt that she would have made the same decision. Even if she didn't want to move, she couldn't hold it against him. He was doing what he thought was best for his children.

And so, one afternoon mid-June, Waverly found herself struggling to hold a stack of boxes in the parking lot outside their new apartment, while her father inspected his pockets for the keys. She took the time

to look around the place, drink in the details. All the buildings were the same, little maroon specks under a bright blue sky. As she turned in a circle, she felt she might get dizzy from the identical windows and stoops and walls. Only, directly behind her, something broke up the sameness. Or, someone, actually. A boy who looked like he might be around her age was sitting on the stoop directly across from her. He had a mess of dark, slightly overgrown curls on top of her head, which were very reminiscent of her own. He had a thick pair of glasses, which magnified his brown eyes, and the freckles dotting the cheeks underneath them. He was wearing an offensively bright yellow Hawaiian shirt, and she had to fight to keep down the laugh bubbling up in her throat at the sight of it. Instead, she turned and walked up the steps, seeing as her dad had finally found the keys.

Apartment 13B was the on the left side of the second floor in building 13. It was larger than their last apartment, with three bedrooms, and a spacious kitchen. Well, spacious for an apartment. Ethan even cracked a smile when he saw that he had his own room, and would no longer have to sleep on the couch, which was the most emotion he'd spared on the topic entirely. Henrietta had raced down the hallway upon gaining entrance to the place, calling dibs on which side of the bedroom she wanted. Waverly watched her go, laughing openly at the tall gangly mess of limbs that she called her sister. At thirteen, she stood at a whopping 5'8, which made her three inches taller than her mother, and four inches taller than her older sister. This was a fact that she lorded over Waverly at any chance she could.

Her sister, in a rather dumb move, chose to put her bed in the corner closest to the door, leaving Waverly a nice spot right under the window. The fire escape of their apartment, evidently, was right outside of her window. She had always wanted to have the fire escape in her room, but it was in her parents' room in the last apartment. She tried to suppress her smile as Henrietta triumphantly bounced in the spot her bed would go, so the younger girl wouldn't get suspicious and try to switch around the furniture placement. She was perfectly happy with letting Henri believe she had won.

It took the entire day, once the movers arrived, to get the furniture

situated. By the time the sky had turned lilac with dusk around nine, Waverly and Henri's room was completely set up. Her favorite set of green and white pinstriped sheets had been pulled over her mattress, and she had gotten halfway through putting up her knick knacks and decorations, before she got bored and decided to leave it for the next day.

"I'm going for a walk," Henri suddenly announced, from where she was sitting on the floor in front of the floor-length mirror hanging on the closet door. She was tying her blonde curls up into a ponytail, sea green eyes staring intensely back at themselves. Waverly had always thought that her younger sister was the perfect blend of her parents' genetics. She had gotten the large, curliness of her mother's hair, only in the golden color of her father's. Her eyes were round and doll-like as her father's, with the light color of her mother's. She was tall like dad, slender like mom, and had the same pointed, sharp jawline they both shared. She tanned golden brown in the summer and went pale in the dead of winter. Waverly hated to admit it, but she'd been jealous of her little sister for a while. The girl could be a model, if she really wanted. She could pursue the dreams that so many little girls have, and for that, she was jealous.

"Don't get lost," Waverly answered, from where she was sitting at her desk, trying to decide where all of her office supply things should go. Henri rolled her eyes, standing up and leaving the room with a very small utterance of goodbye. Once she had closed the door, Waverly stopped fiddling with her belongings, and stood up. The sky was darkening to royal blue, and a spray of stars started to come out of hiding in the enormous sky. Suddenly, the outdoors, albeit hot and humid, seemed much more enticing than the confines of her room.

Waverly climbed out onto the fireplace, dangling her legs in between the bars and resting her forehead on the cool metal in front of her. Instead of more apartments behind her building, the small patch of grass working as her yard emptied into a cul-de-sac, which was mostly taken up by a park with some rusty playground equipment, a few picnic tables, and a little duck pond. The scene was cute, almost serene, as if it didn't exist in the middle of an impoverished apartment neighborhood. The serenity of it all was interrupted by a myriad of voices, followed by a group of people walking down the

street a few seconds later. There was a lot of them, Waverly didn't care enough to count exactly how many, and most of them seemed to be boys. One of the only girls of the group had a skateboard tucked under her arm, the shock of bright red hair on her head tied back in a loose braid. They were all chatting animatedly, as they descended upon the playground equipment like a group of small children.

Before they went too far into the park, Waverly was able to spot the same offensively bright Hawaiian shirt that she had seen earlier. It was the boy that lived across from her. With his friends, he was loud, and seemingly the center of attention- for that conversation at least. Nothing like the silent, gaping boy she had come into contact with earlier. Something about his loud, genuine laugh made her wish she was down there with them. Suddenly, she had a new objective for the summer; make friends with Hawaiian shirt boy's group.